

## **G. Violence and Abuse**

### *Child Abuse and Neglect*

Healthy People 2000 has identified as its objective to reduce to less than 25.2 per 1,000 children the rising incidence of maltreatment of children younger than age 18. It also classifies abuse into four categories: physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect.

In Sullivan County during 1996, there were 406 reports of child abuse and neglect. During the same year, 78 cases were referred to Sullivan County District Attorney Greeley Wells, Jr. for prosecution of child sexual or physical abuse. Of the 406 reports of abuse/neglect, 230 were considered to be "unfounded" (not enough evidence to prosecute), 176 cases were considered to be "indicated" (enough evidence to substantiate the claim). Of those reports, incidents of sexual abuse/exploitation were the most reported with minor physical abuse and physical neglect following. In Tennessee, physical neglect was reported in more cases followed by minor physical abuse and child sexual abuse/exploitation.

According to the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect, approximately 80% of sexual abuse occur within the family structure. Most victims of abuse are female, while the number of male victims is increasing.

### *Domestic Violence*

Healthy People 2000 has identified as its objective to reduce physical abuse directed at women by male partners to no more than 27 per 1,000 couples.

In Sullivan County, there are at least two facilities that serve women and children who are in abusive situations. The majority of individuals served by these facilities are women; however, there have been cases of men calling who are being battered and feel endangered in their homes. Many victims who come to these shelters will return to the violent setting. The occurrence of violence within a family is cyclical, predictable and often viewed as being the victim's fault.

Abuse in the home takes on many forms. Physical abuse is one of the most widely reported form of abuse, however, psychological, emotional, and verbal abuse also occur.

The costs to Sullivan County for abuse, neglect and domestic violence are often difficult to measure. In many cases, victims often do not report the abuse. Cases are also frequently labeled so that victims of assailants are not stigmatized. Because of this, funds are often inappropriately distributed to other agencies.